

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

Bio-terrorism and Municipality Preparedness

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this research is Bio-Terrorism and the preparedness of municipalities. The purpose of this and ensuing research is to demonstrate that municipalities are not effectively or adequately prepared to respond to a Bio-Terrorism attack, due to manning (personnel), adequate training, and a lack of proper protective and detection equipment. The research consisted of surveys and interviews of 48 officers from 43 small (1-50 personnel), medium (50-500 personnel) to large (500 + personnel) agencies. The individuals surveyed included command staff ranging from patrol officers and sergeants, to chiefs of police. The findings from the surveys and interviews in this particular research are demographically and regionally specific to the state of Texas. The data affirms that municipalities fall short in areas of being fully prepared to respond to a chemical or biological attack. It is concluded that even with the shortfalls that municipalities face, there are ways to improve the preparedness level through intergovernmental relationships, better communications within city agencies and through intra-agency training.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction.	1
Review of Literature	3
Methodology	3
Findings	5
Discussions/Conclusions	8
References	11

INTRODUCTION

Germ warfare has long since been a national security threat, and even more so since the Gulf War, 9/11, and the Iraq conflict. The Chemical and Biological threats are no longer just a threat to our soldiers on the battlefield in foreign countries; they have become a threat to our neighborhood streets and even our backyards, because of the criminal and terrorist interests. With the deadliest chemical and biological agents for sale to whichever criminal or terrorist group who wants to pay, or even develop them, the time is NOW, for all cities including small municipalities, to be prepared.

The most serious issues that face all public safety responders in cities and communities today, is that most would not be able to respond adequately to a biological or chemical attack. Due to a lack of planning, training personnel, funding, and proper equipment, responding to such an incident could result in injuries or death to the police officers, firefighters and EMS personnel responding to the incident. Even with Hazardous Materials Response Units (HAZMAT) responding to chemical and biological attacks, there is a high potential for mass casualties, due to the lack of sophisticated surveillance and testing equipment. With the many chemical and biological agents capable of being used and the multitude of delivery systems that range from explosive devices and aerosol cans, to water and even our pets, the “what if” becomes the “how and what now”.

The purpose of this and ensuing research is to address the problem, that municipalities are not properly prepared, with a plan of action to respond effectively to a biological or chemical attack such as Bio-Terrorism. Several underlying problems that must be solved first are, risk assessments to determine if municipalities are threatened

by bio-terrorism; Assuring agencies within municipalities have a working and practiced “Plan of Action” in place, Co-ordinate and facilitate help from assisting federal and local agencies for response in relatively short amount of time. It is also a necessity that individual agencies within these municipalities have the proper equipment to respond to such an attack.

The methods of inquiry for this research will be a review of literature from government and military journals and articles, books on bio-terrorism/terrorism response, along with surveys of police agencies, as well as past surveys and interviews used as data in previous research. It is anticipated that irregardless of the type of biological or chemical attack or incident, police, fire and emergency medical personnel, will always be the first responders. With this information given, it the responsibility of these first responders to prevent the death and injury to not only themselves, but further procure the safety of the general public. In any such event having a working, practiced plan of action in place, is paramount. This plan of action should be elastic and adaptable with the measures or steps outlined for, Police, Fire and EMS personnel and the roles they assume upon arrival at the incident location. The plan should include state and federal agencies and the roles they will take and perform. The ability for all parties involved, being adaptable in the performance of separate tasks and roles should be greatly considered. Depending on the type of chemical or biological incident and location, there could be a lengthy time constraint on the arrival of help from outside (State and Federal) agencies and personnel.

The findings are anticipated to show that even with a larger amount of police personnel being trained most all police agencies, still lack a working, practiced plan of

action for responding to a chemical and biological attack or incident. The findings will further show that even with money given out by the millions for equipment and training from the federal government, the constant need for funding and training to continue is imperative for public safety preparedness. Without this continual and unified training and proper equipment, a response would be ineffective and could result in mass casualties, as well as, legal responsibility. The findings can add support to intra-agency co-operation being necessary in the fight against Bio-Terrorism.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

During the research on the topic of municipalities being prepared to respond to a bioterrorism attack, what the author focused on was the training of the responding agencies. During the review of the researched literature, the author observed that the preparedness level of the country is not where it should be, in terms of the big picture. Although there has been millions of dollars set out by government agencies, to include the Department of Homeland Security, there is still a huge shortage when it comes to preparedness. According to the Council of Foreign Relations (2003, February), “emergency responders lack the necessary funding and preparation needed to adequately respond to a terrorist attack”. The overall process is not limited to just the training of first responders, it needs to involve everyone from city street workers to the city mayors. A strong communication between all entities will develop a solid network that would allow for prevention and preparedness.

METHODOLOGY

The daily threats of law enforcement are a constant, even with the progressive training and ever evolving high tech equipment and gear that are used to work with.

With all that is required of us to afford the communities that we secure the best service, it should be mandated by our citizens that we be prepared for an event with the unforgiving magnitude of a biological or chemical attack. It is hypothesized that even after billions of dollars spent and given out to thousands of agencies and five years to prepare, by effectively planning, equipping, and training that most municipalities are still not ready to adequately respond to devastating an event of Bio-Terrorism. Although most all agencies surveyed stated that they did, have a plan of action and trained personnel, the research will support that several factors still prevent these municipalities from having a “working plan”, a plan that has been tested and practiced. The methods used were two separate surveys and interviews conducted 3 years apart.

The research will consist of surveys and interviews of forty-eight (48) officers from forty-three (43) small (1-50 personnel), medium (50-500 personnel) to large (500 + personnel) agencies. The individuals to be surveyed will include command staff ranging from patrol officers, and sergeants to chiefs of police. These agencies serve populations from two hundred (200) to two million (2,000,000) people and cover every region of the State of Texas (North, South, East, West, Central, Gulf Coast). The survey questionnaires will be answered on a voluntary basis. The raw data will be received from six questions on a survey provided to a member of the responding agencies in 2003 and again to a separate set of responding agencies 2006. The surveyed information that will be gathered for use will be compiled and compared in an effort to affirm the author's hypothesis. Additional research will include surveys and interviews performed in previous academic research, a review of reports and the findings from the General Accounting Office and Office of the Inspector General, as well

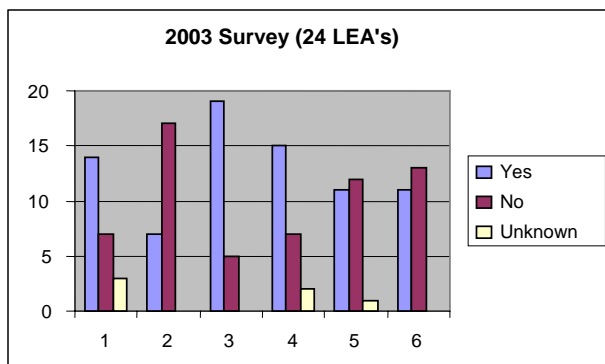
as, reports to Congress and a review of other noted governmental literature, articles, and journals.

FINDINGS

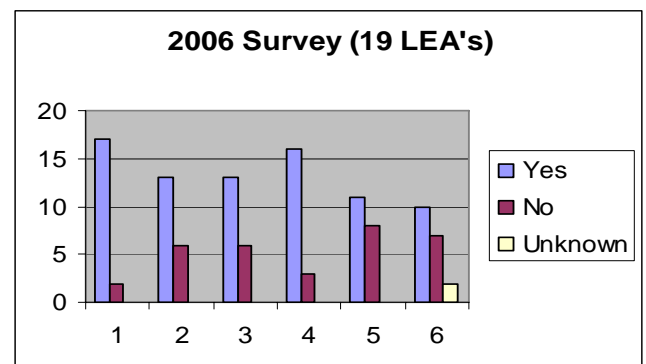
The findings from the surveys and mini interviews in this particular research are demographically and regionally specific to the state of Texas. It is not inclusive of all state, county and municipal agencies in the state, but the survey sample does incorporate agencies from all regional areas of the State (North Texas, South Texas, West Texas, East Texas, Central Texas, and the Texas Gulf Coast). The survey sample in its essence is random and performed on a voluntary basis. It includes 43 small (1-50 personnel), medium (50-500 personnel) to large (500 + personnel) agencies. The 48 individuals surveyed included command staff with a range from patrol officer to sergeants, and sergeants to chiefs of police. These agencies serve populations with a vast range from two hundred (200) to two million (2,000,000). This survey does not account for losses or gains of personnel to agencies, so a margin of error was not specifically calculated, but may slightly exist. This data shows that most all municipalities fall short in all the areas of being fully prepared to respond to a chemical or biological attack. A positive finding that does impact overall preparedness if such an event occurred is the data showing that individual officers have become more prepared. This fact alone illustrates that eventually officers can succeed in becoming fully prepared.

The results of the two surveys from 2003 and 2006 indicated the combined results that out of 43 agencies, sixteen percent (16%) had trained all of their officers, forty-six percent (46%) had several officers trained, twenty-one percent (21%) had no

training for their agency, and seven percent (7%) were unknown. The breakdown (see graphs for 2 surveys) of the two surveys showed an eighteen percent (19%) increase from 2003 to 2006, but when the surveys were combined it only showed an overall increase of four percent (4%) for the three-year difference in surveys. The two most observable changes between the two surveys was that thirty-nine percent (39%) more of the responding officers were familiar with their policies and plans, and thirty-one percent (31%) more agencies had written implemented policies and plans. The data also showed a five percent increase (5%) increase in the practicing of their action plans. Of the forty-three (43) survey departments, sixteen (16) stated that they practiced the plans with other agencies, of the sixteen only stated two that the practiced their plans regularly. Forty-nine percent (49%) of the responding agencies stated that they had some type of protective gear. During interviews conducted after the surveys, further data was revealed that only about half of the agencies had readily available access to their gear, the majority advising that the gear was stored with their respective fire departments. Also notable was an eleven percent (-11%) decrease in the responding agencies belief that a chemical or biological attack was a potential threat to their areas. See graphs (below) for 2003 (Figure1) and 2006 (Figure 2) for the question breakdown.



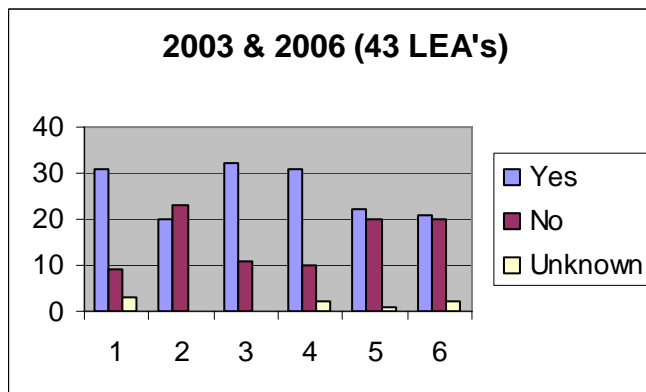
(Figure 1)



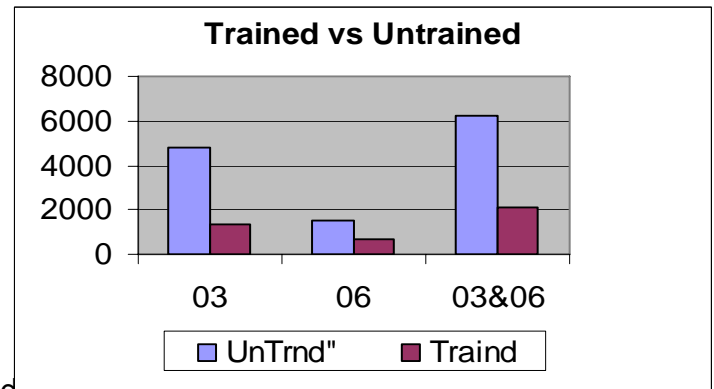
(Figure 2)

The data received from the two separate surveys from all responses combined showed a 15.8% increase in overall preparedness. This increase over a three-year period indicates a 5.27% improvement in preparedness per agency yearly. Figure three below shows the combined surveys and Figure four shows the percentages of officers trained from the total manpower perspective from the 43 responding agencies.

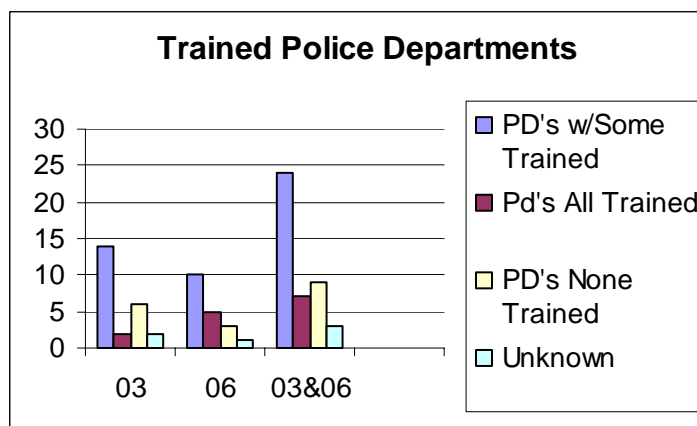
(Figure 3)



(Figure 4)



2003 2006, and a combination of both. The graph includes fully trained agencies, some or partially trained agencies, agencies with no officer trained and unknown training.



(Figure 5)

The above percentages and figures show that some progress has been made towards becoming more prepared, but also shows that as a whole, the majority of municipalities and including the larger ones still lack the capability of being completely prepared to

respond to a chemical or biological attack. The above results, affirm the hypothesis, that after five years since 9/11 and billions of dollars spent, we are not still prepared.

CONCLUSIONS

As the 21st century is approached, the actions and preparation taken must reflect on our past to preserve the future for our children and then theirs. The future is still based on small municipalities and communities and the values that they strive to maintain and project, as a model “American” city. It is these values that speak out to create the picture that we are safe, because our community is ready to protect its citizens. This (for the most part) is true for the daily pitfalls that all of us at some time will succumb to. The date of 09/11/01 is a permanent scar on our hearts and pride as a world power, further more on our economy. It only cost the terrorists maybe a million or two to plan, train and execute this horrendous event, but it cost the American people billions! We do not want another day similar to this in the form of an epidemic from some biologically manufactured disease or a chemical release in some small community that has become a tourist venue for millions of people. Though It is inevitable that all small communities will never fully be prepared, due to man power issues, funding, and proper sophisticated equipment, it is the duty of Agency Heads and City Governments to realize and put forth efforts to plan and prepare for an event of such great magnitude. City governments must make a daunting effort to train the first responders, develop intergovernmental relations with local agencies within the respective counties, in order to develop and draft formal assistance agreements that would eliminate a heavy impact on the affected city. Practice must take place on a consistent schedule to address local concerns and the issues of intra-agency

communications. Training will impact departmental budgets, manning, and resources of all size agencies, but it is a required remedy to prevent and solve portions of the problem. To circumvent some of these major costs, the Department of Homeland Security has projected a spending amount in excess of 800 million dollars to be used for homeland defense. DHS and the Center for Disaster Preparedness have made available, free training and grant programs to obtain equipment, personnel and assessment needs. This option should be taken advantage of. It only takes a small amount of time and a little effort on the part of not just the Agency heads, but rather a joint effort amongst the entire city administration. To fulfill our professional obligations to the communities that depend and trust in our abilities to protect them, we must be prepared. It is time to change how we approach and operate to meet this challenge, by putting forth this effort.

In conclusion the research shows with numbers and percentages that municipalities as a whole are not prepared to adequately respond to a bio-terrorism incident. The lack of resources to properly plan and operate effectively, without the proper equipment, and the lack of intra-agency cooperation will continue to impact a potential coordinated effort to be prepared. A positive note that was not considered in the research on the subject of preparedness of the municipalities was the individual law enforcement officer that makes up the largest portion of a municipality. The resiliency and innovative thinking that each individually trained officer brings to the table, is paramount to public safety as a whole. Although these characteristics do not take the place of proper equipment, additional resources and planning, it would allow for a more educated and evaluated approach to a chemical or biological attack.

The author is a father, husband, leader, police officer, soldier, and supervisor, and with each new title the author's priorities are idealistically and morally forced to change. The colossal events of the very recent past and those unforeseen events to come in the future have added a new title to the municipal priority list!

"Destiny is no matter of Chance, it is a matter of Choice. It is not a thing to be waited for it is a thing to be Achieved!"

-William Jennings Bryan

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